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ABSTRACT

Background information on the use of telecourses across the nation and, specifically, in Arkansas is provided in this report along with recommendations for policies and procedures relative to the use of telecourses by Arkansas colleges and universities. After tracing national trends in the acceptance of telecourses, an overview is provided of what telecourses are, what they are not, and who takes telecourses. The next section looks at state policies in Oklahoma and Texas, pointing to the states as leaders in the national trend toward the utilization and acceptance of telecourses. Next, an overview is presented of the use of telecourses in Arkansas, and the creation of Arkansas' Telecommunication Consortium in 1985 and its subsequent activities. After stating the goals and objectives of the Postsecondary Educational Telecommunications Task Force, the report offers the Task Force's guidelines for the use of telecourses, covering areas including administrative responsibilities, academic responsibilities, copyright compliance, faculty responsibilities, support services, student responsibilities, and state funding. (RO)

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REPORT

OF THE

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

TASK FORCE

TO

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DIRECTOR

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

JC 860 380

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NATIONAL TRENDS, WITH EMPHASIS ON STATE PLANS CONTIGUOUS TO ARKANSAS

Colleges and universities began offering credit courses via television in the 1950's. These early "TV courses" or "televised courses" offered no more in the way of production quality than a professor, a pointer, and a blackboard. The teachers on such television courses essentially brought their classrooms to the television studio and delivered lectures supported by reading assignments and a text.

After more than a quarter century of experimentation and spurred by such factors as the development of public broadcasting, technological advances, and a $150 million Annenberg Grant, high quality "telecourses" have emerged and are now readily available from a variety of experienced producers.

NATIONAL ACCEPTANCE

In April of 1986, Florida State University of Tallahassee, Florida, became the one-thousandth college to offer telecourses for credit through the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) Adult Learning Service. Through that network of almost 300 participating public television stations more than 400,000 students have been served since 1981. In 1984-85, more than 135,000 tuition-paying students enrolled in college-credit telecourses through PBS.

Since 1981, the Center for Telecommunications at Dallas County Community College, the national's largest producer of telecourses, has licensed more than 650 colleges and universities to offer telecourses. These institutions are located in

every state in the nation and represent a true cross section of the nation's colleges and universities, including Harvard, Antioch, Purdue, Miami-Dade, University of Georgia, Johnson County, Ohio State, Tarrant County, Texas A&M, and the University of Michigan.

TELECOURSES

Telecourses are not illustrated correspondence courses nor are they a series of video tapes featuring a professor lecturing or demonstrating a procedure. In modern telecourses, the TV component takes the student out of, rather than into, the classroom; and the printed support material plays a vital role. A telecourse uses a variety of learning strategies to provide a complete educational unit available to students in the convenience of their own homes.

Because telecourses allow knowledge to be examined and presented through sight, sound, color, movement, and print, information can be disseminated much more rapidly than through traditional classroom lecture techniques. For this reason, telecourses do not generally adhere to the traditional time frame used for lecture courses. Rather, they tend to run 15 hours in total length, either in a format of 30 programs, each of 30 minutes duration, or 13 to 15 one-hour programs.

Typically, telecourses are supplemented by various printed materials. Textbooks and/or other readings are required for each telecourse. Most major producers also provide study guides which contain step-by-step directions for completing the course. Supplemental readings present alternative views to those of the

text author in order to provide the student with a range of intellectual exploration.

Increasingly, telecourse students are required to go to their college campus for orientation, review, and testing sessions. Every telecourse is coordinated by an on-campus instructor who conducts the orientation and review sessions, may assign supplemental readings or other projects, and is available throughout the semester for personal consultation with telecourse students. The instructor is also responsible for testing and the assignment of a grade.

A January, 1986, publication by the PBS Adult Learning Service reports that, according to a recent Roper study, 34% of the population between ages 18 and 45 would like to take a college course via TV and would be willing to pay for it.

In 1984, the Instructional Telecommunications Consortium (ITC) conducted a national study of students enrolled in telecourses and concluded that such enrollees constitute a distinct population. Sixty-five percent of the students were age 22-49 and 18% were 50-59. The majority were employed during the semester in which they were taking telecourses. They enroll in telecourses because of the convenience, but they expect these courses to be of high quality, to be applicable to a degree, and to have a positive effect on their careers.

Colleges which have offered telecourses for several years report that a substantial number of student who begin their college careers through telecourses go on to enroll as regular,

on-campus students. Officials at the Dallas County Community College Center for Telecommunications place the number of such students at 60-70%.

Additionally, telecourses serve already-enrolled, on-campus students by providing greater flexibility in scheduling. PBS reports that 70% of the telecourse students are concurrently taking traditional, on-campus courses, and 75% are pursuing a degree. Many such students are able to take one or more courses per semester which their class or work schedule would have otherwise precluded.

STATE POLICIES

Two states contiguous to Arkansas are among the leaders in the national trend toward the utilization and acceptance of telecourses. The Oklahoma Board of Regents, after a five-year pilot project that involved extensive reporting and follow up on telecourse students, now treats telecourses like traditional college courses. Credit hours generated by these courses are resident credit and count as part of each institution's FTE for budget purposes. Twenty Oklahoma institutions, including Oklahoma University, now regularly offer credit through telecourses.

Probably the most extensive research on telecourses at the state level has been conducted by the Coordinating Board of the Texas College and University System. That recently completed work has resulted in similar acceptance of telecourses in Texas, with telecourses funded just like traditional on-campus courses.

Among other states funding telecourses are California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

TELECOURSES IN ARKANSAS

At least fourteen of the colleges and universities of Arkansas (AC, ASU, EACC, GCCC, HSU, MCCC, PCCC, OBU, RMCC, UAF, UALR, UAM, UCA, and WCC) have been licensed to offer telecourses on one or more occasions since 1981. Several institutions scheduled telecourses in the 1970's, primarily through AETN.

Dr. Gary Chamberlin, former director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, reports that when the question of state funding of telecourses arose in 1983, a decision was made to handle requests on a "justification basis," pending any modifications to the ADHE funding formula.

In the Spring and Summer of 1985, AETN hosted two discussion sessions with representatives invited from all Arkansas Higher Education Colleges and Universities. This effort resulted in a Fall Conference in Little Rock to establish a Telecommunication Consortium.

The representative from Garland County Community College was chosen as coordinator for the first year. The primary objective of the consortium was to work with AETN officials in offering at least one telecourse in the Spring of 1986 through the state colleges and universities. American National Government was selected as the first consortium telecourse. The institutions

which decided to participate in the Spring 1985 telecourse venture included ASU-Jonesboro, UALR, East Arkansas Community College, Garland County Community College, and Rich Mountain Community College. Initial collective enrollment was 105 students, despite late, low-profile publicity.

The secondary objective of the consortium was to schedule a meeting with the Director of the State Department of Higher Education in order to review funding and enrollment reporting for participation in the telecourses. This meeting took place on February 3, 1986.

The Telecommunication Consortium met in Little Rock on February 25, and selected "Focus on Society" (a 30 program telecourse on Introduction to Sociology) for the Fall 1986 semester. A maximum licensure fee of $400 will be required of participating institutions in addition to a $15 per capita cost for each registered student.

As a follow-up to the February 3rd meeting, the Director of the Department of Higher Education invited the Consortium Coordinator to make a presentation on March 11, 1986, to state Academic Officers about the present and projected role of telecommunications in Arkansas Higher Education.

The state director next appointed a task force as follows:

Alan Hoffman (GCCC), Chairman
John Spraggins (DHE), Ex Officio
Richard Hudson (WCC)
Gail Kettlewell (SAU-Tech)
Harold Luneau (UALR)

The task force was given the charge to develop policy and procedural recommendations relative to telecourses for Arkansas Colleges and Universities.

TASK FORCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The availability of quality education directly affects the welfare of a geographical location and the populations within its boundaries. It is recognized that individuals have the right to enhance the quality of life by availing themselves of quality educational experiences. There is also present today the rapidly growing phenomenon of technology and its impact on education and the delivery of educational services through the media. With these facts before us, the following goals and objectives are set forth by the Postsecondary Educational Telecommunications Task Force.

The primary goal of the Task Force is to ensure the availability, academic quality, and integrity of telecourses in the State of Arkansas.

SUPPORTIVE OBJECTIVES

1. To develop guidelines which address the issue of academic quality.
2. To assist in encouraging statewide accessibility and cost effectiveness of telecourses.
3. To provide an alternative educational delivery system to non-residential students whose circumstances may limit their access to higher education.
4. To validate non-traditional distance learning as a legitimate and desirable mode of instruction.
5. To emphasize higher education's responsibility of reaching a large and diverse student population with quality educational experiences.
6. To demonstrate the practicality and cost effectiveness of serving a large number of students within the context of limited institutional resources.

7. To reassure the population and public colleges and universities that traditional instruction will maintain its own importance and that distance learning acts as an alternative, not a replacement for, standard classroom instruction.

8. To explore the benefits of affiliation with regional, national and international telecourse consortia in order to take advantage of promotion and management practices as they are occurring within other institutions.

Partial listing of available consortia:

1. International University Consortium
Telecommunications in Learning
Center of Adult Education
Adelphi Road and University Boulevard
College Park, Maryland

2. National University Consortium
University of Maryland
University College
College Park, Maryland

3. Public Service Satellite Consortium
Suite 987, 1660 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

4. The Instructional Telecommunications Consortium
American Association of Community and
Junior Colleges
One Dupont Circle, Suite 410
Washington, D.C.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. TELEVISED INSTRUCTION - any form of instruction that uses live and/or pre-produced television programs as a primary mode for delivery of instruction to the student at a location removed from the physical presence of the instructor. Delivery systems may include but are not limited to one or more of the following:

- open channel television
- closed-circuit television
- cable television
- low-power television
- communication and/or direct broadcast satellite
- satellite master antenna system
- microwave
- videotape
- video disc
- instructional television fixed service (ITFS)

2. TELECOURSE - the subject of televised instruction that uses pre-produced television programs as the primary mode of instructional delivery.

SUMMARY

Much of the current controversy about telecourses stems from significant misperceptions about independent learning systems in general and telecourses in particular.

Without question, telecourses have become an accepted method of increasing access to higher education in the United States. Dr. Bernard Luskin, in the May 1983 issue of the COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL wrote:

> "Colleges and universities, on the one hand, and public broadcasting stations, on the other, are learning to work together to make additional education opportunities available to individuals who otherwise would not have an opportunity for further education without the intervention of telecommunications. As cable becomes much more available, and as new technology offers additional avenues, more and more opportunities will become possible for the potential students."

With Arkansas' substandard "college going rate," telecourses constitute a proven alternative delivery system that is both affordable and available.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on this background of information and diligent research and study by the Task Force, we recommend the following guidelines:

A. Administrative Responsibilities

1. The assessment of programs delivered by telecourse shall take place in the context of the stated educational mission of the college or university.

2. Colleges and universities which participate in telecourse instruction shall develop and use appropriate outcome measures to assess program effectiveness.

3. Colleges or universities shall assign primary responsibility for the administration of post-secondary instruction to the chief academic officer of the institution or his/her designee.

4. Tuition charges for telecourses shall be the same as those for on-campus courses.

5. The academic calendar for telecourses for residential credit shall conform closely with the established academic calendar.

6. The colleges or universities shall make no transcript distinction between residential credit awarded for telecourse study and that awarded for traditional classroom study.

7. Participating colleges and universities shall not use telecourses for more than one-third of the total semester credit hours applied toward any degree or certificate.

8. Each course offered through televised instruction must be applicable to a campus-based degree or certificate program approved by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.

9. Participating colleges and universities shall guarantee that telecourse enrollment will not exceed 20% of the total credit hours generated in a given semester.

B. Academic Responsibilities

1. Faculty assigned to teach a telecourse shall be the prerogative of each college campus and shall be consistent with local appointment policies.

2. Faculty assigned to teach a telecourse shall hold an on-campus orientation session with registered students and shall verify an enrollment roster to the Registrar by the 11th day of instruction or its equivalent.

3. The instructional arrangement for each telecourse shall be comparable to those observed in on-campus courses. Special emphasis and care shall be taken to administer a mid semester and final exam on campus for anyone seeking academic credit.

4. Faculty shall assign appropriate readings from the textbook to be used in conjunction with the telecourse.

5. Faculty are strongly encouraged to use and to evaluate student workbooks which have been designed as part of the telecourse learning experience.

6. Faculty are free to demand whatever additional work they deem necessary to award academic credit and a letter grade.

C. Copyright Compliance

1. Participating colleges and universities shall evidence compliance with all copyright regulations regarding telecourses.

2. The Telecommunications Consortium shall meet with representatives from AETN-TV to determine pertinent copyright regulations. This information shall be forwarded to all participating postsecondary institutions by AETN as part of the contracting responsibilities for each telecourse.

D. Faculty Responsibilities

1. Faculty assigned to telecourses shall be academically qualified in the subject area.

2. Faculty shall be required to provide a syllabus similar to one required for an on-campus course in order that all requirements are clear.

3. Faculty will set orientation, review, and exam sessions at times most appropriate for the student population.

4. Faculty assigned to a telecourse shall provide students with written information of when they are available for campus office consultation, and when they can be reached by telephone each week of the semester.

E. Support Services

1. Library Learning Center Directors will be appraised of the course name and materials needed for support learning.

2. Counselors will be advised of telecourses and will provide assistance for special student needs.

3. Deans, program advisors, and faculty will aid in monitoring program needs and success.

F. Student Responsibilities

1. Students enrolled in telecourses will be required to follow requirements of the syllabus which include:

   a. an orientation session at the "credit-granting " institution.
   b. mid-term and final exams shall be held on campus.

2. Students enrolled in telecourses will be encouraged to attend review sessions, contact instructor, and use college support services during the semester enrolled.

3. Students enrolled in a telecourse must satisfy the same requirements for admission to the institution, to the academic program, and to the course, as would be required of students enrolled in on-campus credit courses.

G. State Funding

1. Colleges and universities which follow these guidelines in offering telecourses shall continue to present this information to representatives from the Department of Higher Education as a justification item for state funding for the biennium of 1987-'89.

2. Upon state adoption of these guidelines, telecourse enrollment shall be included in 11th day registration reporting to D.H.E. by all participating colleges and universities.

3. As of the 1989-'91 biennium, telecourses shall cease being justification items and become an integral part of the regular funding process.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
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